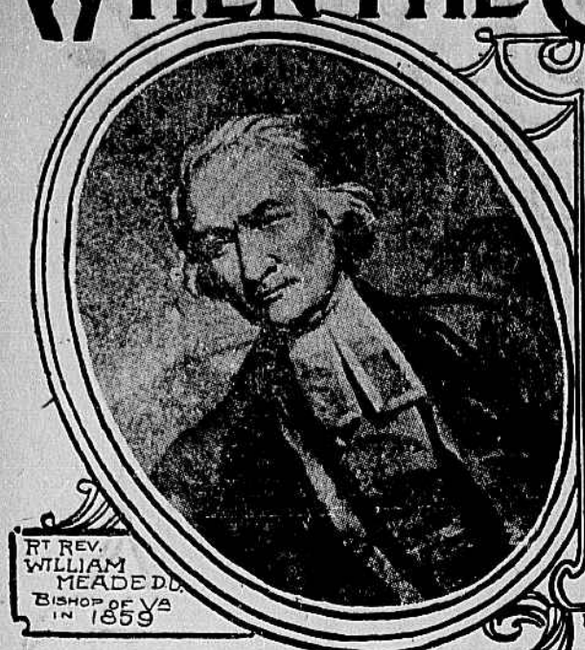
# WHEN THE CONVENTION MET IN RICHMOND IN 1859



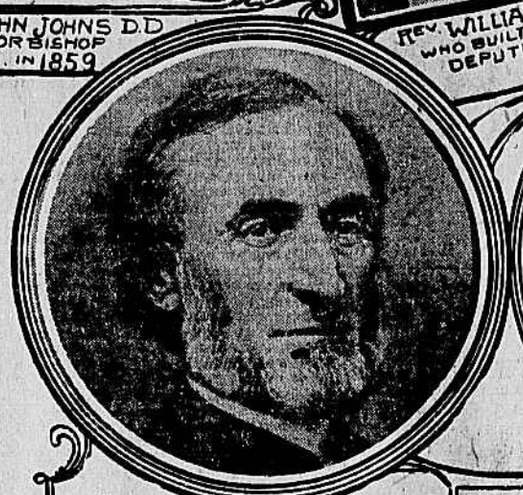
RT REV. WILLIAM MEADE D.D. BISHOP OF VA IN 1859

RT. REV. JOHN JOHNS D.D. COADJUTOR BISHOP OF VA. IN 1859

REV. WILLIAM NORWOOD D.D. WHO BUILT ST PAUL'S WHERE DEPUTIES SIT

REV GEORGE WOODBRIDGE D.D. RECTOR OF MONUMENTAL IN 1859

REV CHARLES MINNIGERODE D.D. RECTOR OF ST PAUL'S IN 1859.



REV JOSHUA PETERKIN D.D. RECTOR OF ST. JAMES IN 1859

REV. RICHARD H. WILMER D.D. RECTOR OF EMANUEL IN 1859

BISHOPS IN SESSION

## COMPARATIVE VIEW OF WORK

| | 1859. | 1904. |
|---|---|---|
| Baptisms: | | |
| Infants, 74,533; adults, 14,729 | 89,282 | |
| Infants, 145,685; adults, 36,933 | | 182,618 |
| Marriages | 21,225 | 67,636 |
| Burials | 37,021 | 112,581 |

All the above items are for periods of three years preceding the General Convention.

REPORTS OF ANNUAL DIOCESAN COUNCILS.

| | 1859. | 1907. |
|---|---|---|
| *Whole number of clergy | 2,065 | 5,381 |
| Whole number of communicants | 139,611 | 848,974 |
| Whole number of Sunday-school teachers | 14,019 | 49,000 |
| Whole number of Sunday-school pupils | 113,912 | 451,511 |
| Whole number of parishes and missions | 2,120 | 7,818 |
| Whole number of church edifices | 1,395 | **6,550 |

* In 1808 (ninety-nine years ago) the whole number of clergy was 169. There being no returns from Virginia and elsewhere, the estimated actual number is 200 for that year.

** Estimated.

NOT since 1859 has the Triennial Convention of the Episcopal Church in America assembled in Richmond, and not since that date has this important church body held its sessions in a city of as small a population as Richmond.

When the convention of 1859 assembled, by a curious coincidence, the Southern Baptist Convention, which met in Richmond last May, also held its session in Richmond the same year.

**Convention of '59.**

The convention of 1859 was held in St. Paul's Church, where the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies will sit this month. The gathering was hardly half the size of the present body, there being at that time but one diocese to a State, and the great area west of the Mississippi River was then an almost unknown missionary territory. The House of Bishops also was a much smaller body, and their sessions in the basement of St. Paul's Church lacked something of the ease and comfort which the House of Bishops will find in the State Capitol.

St. Paul's was at that time a comparatively new church, being in fact but fifteen years old. No memorial windows adorned its auditorium, and in 1859 the iron hand of war had not stamped on the building the historic associations which are now among its most cherished possessions. From its windows could be seen the old State Capitol, standing in its simple dignity on the brow of the hill, the same building, in fact, in which the Diocese of Virginia was organized, and in which for many years service was held on every alternate Sunday.

Crawford's Washington, fresh from the hands of its maker, surmounted its pedestal, but the stately group which surround the equestrian general were lacking in several of their members, and Crawford, the artist, was already dead.

**The Richmond Ministers.**

Among the Richmond ministers it may be truly said, "And there were giants in those days."

The host of the convention, the rector of St. Paul's, was the much beloved Dr. Charles Minnigerode, whose tender ministrations during the years of war and desolation which followed hard on the convention year of 1859 rendered him doubly dear to the whole city.

Fifteen years before St. Paul's had come out as a colony from Monumental, leaving but fourteen families at the old church, and under the rectorship of Dr. Norwood erecting the present building of St. Paul's Church. Monumental retained the services of Dr. Woodbridge, and the remnant were shortly afterwards joined by the congregation of the old "Pineapple" Church, on Seventeenth Street, who were burned out of their church home. The "Pineapple" Church was later rebuilt and opened as a mission under the name of Christ Church, and after being again burned moved on up into Venable Street. St. John's had in 1859 the services of Rev. Henry S. Kepler, and the much beloved and venerated Dr. Joshua Peterkin, then an active young clergyman, was in charge of the new congregation of St. James, who had recently erected their building "in the far West End," at Fifth and Marshall.

This marked the westernmost bound of church extension previous to the war, although at the time the convention met money was pledged for a considerable part of the cost of erecting St. Mark's Church. The war came on before these pledges were paid, and the building of this church was delayed ten years or more, until the well-known and much loved Dr. Dashiell again undertook to raise funds for a church house.

**Among Those There.**

It was not until in the years after the great struggle that Grace Church and later All Saints', Holy Trinity and other churches in the West End were projected, the march of the church having been steadily westward since the days when Parson Buchanan crossed the valley from St. John's and held services in the State Capitol.

The venerable Bishop Meade presided over the Diocese of Virginia, and was the host of the convention, assisted by his coadjutor, Bishop Johns. Among the members present were Alonzo and Horatio Potter, the father and uncle of Bishop Henry C. Potter, of New York. Forty-two members sat in the House of Bishops. Emmanuel Church had already been established in Henrico county, near Brook Hill, and the rector there was Rev. R. H. Wilmer, afterwards consecrated Bishop of Mississippi.

There was much social life in the convention of 1859, the giving of great dinner parties being the favorite and accepted form of entertaining. The Woman's Auxiliary had not been organized, but many of the delegates were accompanied by their wives, and the social life of the convention was one of its most enjoyable features. The Exchange and Ballard House was in the height of its fame, this being the year that the Prince of Wales, now King Edward of England, visited Richmond, and stopped there. The Spotswood Hotel, at Eighth and Main, was also a favorite stopping place, and many visitors to the present convention who have have not been in Richmond since 1859, have been writing for reservations at these famous hotels, both of which have been out of existence for years.

**War Coming On.**

Already the country was being shaken with political considerations, and stormy debates are said to have taken place in the convention over semi-political questions, the convention taking no action, however, which was construed as offensive to either side.

It is significant of the trend of the times that forty-eight years after the convention of 1859, the chief body of the American church again assembles in Richmond, and that in this meeting the principal subject of discussion will be the devising of plans for bettering the missionary influences put about the negro race in America. And while there are grave differences of opinion as to methods, it is fully believed that the time has come when the negro can be discussed without heat and unnecessary bitterness.

**Some Comparisons.**

Some comparisons of the state of the church in the United States at the time of the convention of 1859 and at present will be interesting.

Baptisms reported in 1859 were 89,282, and in 1904, 182,618, more than double.

Marriages also increased in even greater proportion, ministers of the church solemnizing 21,225 marriages in the three years preceding 1859, against 67,636 in 1904. Burials were 37,021 as compared with 112,581. All of these figures are for periods of three years preceding the General Convention. The statistics for 1907 have not been made public.

The whole number of clergy in 1859 was 2,065, as compared with 5,381 at present, and the communicants have increased in greater proportion, from 139,611 to 848,974.

Sunday-school teachers have increased from 14,029 to 49,000, and pupils from 113,912 to 451,511.

Church edifices have increased from 1,395 to 6,550. In 1808, ninety-nine years ago, the whole number of clergy in the American church was 169, and there being no returns from several dioceses, the number is estimated at 200 for that year.

**Churches of Richmond.**

The churches of Richmond were manned with a force of strong men in the years previous to the war, all denominations having men of striking ability in their pulpits. Dr. Moses D. Hoge, of the Second Presbyterian Church, was, perhaps, the most notable of the group, and Dr. T. V. Moore, of the First Presbyterian Church, where the City Hall now stands, was also doing an aggressive and permanent work. In prominent Methodist pulpits were Rev. James A. Duncan and Rev. John E. Edwards, both men who have left their impress on their denomination. The most prominent Baptist pastor was Rev. John L. Burrows, of the First Baptist Church.

There are still many people in Richmond who have a peculiar veneration and love for the memory of the rectors of ante-bellum days, and in a particular sense for those who were their spiritual advisers to the stormy days of war and chaos which followed.

For high character, for high spiritual devotion, for activity, for sympathy and for loving kindness it would be hard to match the group that filled the Richmond pulpits in the years preceding the War between the States.

**Progress of City.**

Those who remember the convention of 1859—and there will be some in Richmond who attended the sessions of that body—cannot fail to be impressed with the progress made by Richmond in all lines in the past half century, and that progress notwithstanding the ravages of warfare, fire and carpetbag government, which so tried the patience and endurance of Richmond's population.

# THE CHURCH IN VIRGINIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

By PHILIP ALEXANDER BRUCE.

**I. Popular Religious Feeling.**

Although the principal motives for the first settlement of Virginia were commercial, still that great enterprise had its religious aspect. Back of all their thirst for gold and trade calculations, there was among its supporters a spirit eager to extend to the savage inhabitants the blessings of Christianity. Ralph Hamor reflected an almost general feeling when he exclaimed: "What is more excellent, more precious, more glorious, than converting a heathen nation from worshiping the Devil to the saving knowledge and true worship of God in Jesus Christ?" Apart from the lofty missionary spirit animating so many high-minded men among them, we find the whole body of these first pioneers showing on every appropriate occasion their loyalty to the religious observances familiar to them from childhood. Daily the founders of Jamestown attended morning and evening prayers, and joined in singing a psalm; on each recurring Sunday two sermons were preached before them, and once in the course of every three months they received the Holy Communion. Delaware, on his arrival at Jamestown, fell on his knees, and, in the presence of the awed and reverent people, made a long and silent prayer. Daily during his administration prayers were read at 10 o'clock in the morning and at 4 in the afternoon. On Sunday two sermons were preached, and on Thursday one. Of all those terrible divine and martial laws which he thought necessary for the complete repression of every form of disorder and wrongdoing, he enforced with most strictness the numerous provisions adopted to compel respect for religion and the different ecclesiastical ordinances. Among the most important acts passed by the first Assembly (1619) were those designed to advance the religious and moral welfare of the people. This spirit was again and again inculcated by the instructions delivered to every Governor on his appointment. In the far-seeing orders drawn up for the guidance of the persons placed at the head of the expedition of 1607, they were urged to obey and fear God, "the Giver of all goodness, for every plantation which our Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out." This pious invocation was repeated from decade to decade.

There were many proofs of popular religious feeling. Throughout the seventeenth century this feeling found expression in the celebration of days of thanksgiving and humiliation. The anniversaries of the great massacres of 1622 and 1644 were always observed as fast days; and so also were days specially designated by the General Assembly in expiation of the sins of the people, or in deprecation of the divine anger, as exhibited in the prevalence of an epidemic, causing widespread mortality. In the same way days of thanksgiving were appointed, when the crop of tobacco had been extraordinarily abundant, or an Indian incursion had been successfully withstood. The popular reverence for religion was also reflected in the tone of the wills, which were often a voluminous confession of faith; in the tone of private correspondence, like the letters of William Fitzhugh and William Byrd; in bequests of Bibles, books, of sermons, and religious works, like the "Whole Duty of Man," "Practice of Piety," "Pilgrim's Progress," and "Saints' Everlasting Rest," and in testamentary gifts for the benefit of the destitute and infirm. The religious feeling was also shown in the provisions for the observance of the Sabbath. The first General Assembly passed a law requiring of every citizen attendance at divine service on Sunday; and this law was again and again enacted. That it was rigidly enforced was revealed by the number of persons who were summoned before the county courts for violating its terms. In many respects the supervision was as strict in Virginia as it was in New England, where the stern and austere code of the Puritans was in operation. Even the most trivial violations of the sacred character of the day were invariably punished; and this seems all the more remarkable in a community where all the amusements and pleasures within the people's reach were heartily encouraged, provided that they were not carried to a point dangerous to the peace and moral health of society. The authorities were equally vigilant in punishing all persons guilty of drunkenness, profanity, defamation and incontinence and the like. "The country is full of sober, modest persons," wrote the author of "Leah and Rachel," "and many that fear God and follow that perfect rule of our blessed Saviour, to do as they would be done by; and of such a happy inclination is the country that many, who, in England, have been lewd and idle there, in imitation of the industry they find there, not only grow ashamed of their former courses, but abhor to hear of them, and in small time wipe off those stains they have been formerly tainted with. I can confidently affirm that, since my being in England, which is not yet four months, I have been an eye and ear witness of more deceits and villainies (and such as modesty forbids me to utter) than I either saw or heard mention made in Virginia in my one and twenty years abroad in those parts."

**II. Church Government.**

The parish was the local unit for the administration of the religious affairs and the promotion of the moral health of the community. As one of the ordinary local divisions of England, it was established in Virginia at an early date. Every new county was laid off in new parishes, whose boundary lines were determined by the voice of the inhabitants, with the approval of the General Assembly. In 1661 there were about fifty parishes in the Colony; forty years later there were still the same number, owing to the consolidation of the small parishes. As a rule, each parish fronted on a stream for a great distance up and down, but its boundary lines perpendicular to the stream ran back into the country only a few miles. The parish took this shape from its conformity to the situation of the groups of plantations embraced in its area. Not infrequently it was divided into enormous halves by a wide river or broad inlet of the bay. Every parish was laid off into precincts.

The administration of the affairs of each parish was in the control of a local body known in Virginia, as in England, as the vestry. Each of the vestries was composed of the foremost men residing in the parish represented by it, whether from the point of view of intelligence, wealth or social position. To the power derived from an office of acknowledged authority there was added the great personal weight given by large possessions, force of character and intellect, and the very best education which England or Virginia afforded. It is rare to note in the county records the name of a vestryman who, in signing documents, was only able to make his mark. Many vestrymen enjoyed the further distinction of being members of the county court, the House of Burgesses, or the Executive Council. It does not seem strange to discover that even so powerful an individual as the Governor himself was generally at great pains to be conciliatory in his bearing towards the vestries, not only because they had practical control of their communities, and, through their representatives, of the Colonial Assembly, but also because their family connections in England were often able to affect favorably or unfavorably his standing with the persons to whom he owed his appointment, and upon whose good will his continuance in office depended.

In the long run the vestries proved themselves to be, of all the public bodies in the colony, the most tenacious of their right of independent action, and in their contentions with Governor, commissary or clergy, invariably turned up the victorious party. Thoroughly understanding the local interests of their parishes, they showed, as a rule, a determination to support these interests, whether or not their conduct was opposed to immemorial English customs, or brought them in direct conflict with the most influential personages of the colony. In the firmness and persistency with which they, on so many occasions, refused to be guided by anything but what was called for by the welfare of their community, they revealed themselves as the earliest defenders to spring up in Virginia of the principle of local administration, free from all outside interference. Chosen by the people, they were truly the representatives of the people within the sphere to which their jurisdiction was confined; and the example set by them had a powerful influence in nourishing the popular form of government.

Far more controlling was the influence which the vestrymen exercised from a social point of view. As the first gentlemen in the county, apart from the prestige they derived from being the principal guardians of public morals, they were looked up to as the models of all that was most polished and cultivated in their respective parishes. It was one of the happiest features of that early society that each community possessed in its vestry a body of men prompted as well by every instinct of birth, education and fortune, as by every dictate of their official duty, to set the people at large a good example in their personal deportment and in their general conduct. To their influence is directly traceable a very large proportion of what was most elevated and attractive in the social life of the seventeenth century, and to that influence we are, in no small degree, indebted for the character of the distinguished men of Virginia who cast such renown over the great era of the Revolution.

Who appointed the members of the vestry? Just after the meeting of the first General Assembly, in 1619, the choice seems to have been made by the county court, but by 1641 the parishioners themselves appear to have acquired the power. At the end of the century the selection was exercised exclusively by the freeholders and householders. The number of persons composing a single vestry was limited to twelve, who were required to hold at least two meetings in the course of a year. The first important duty of the vestry was to appoint the clergyman of their parish. Their second appears to have partaken somewhat of a judicial character, as it involved an investigation into those cases of moral offenses which they were authorized to present, if well grounded, through the church wardens to the county court for final prosecution. Their third great function was to lay the parish levy. They usually met in October to lay this levy, as by the time that month had rolled around the tobacco crop, having been housed and cured, was in a condition to be exported.

A large part of the work performed by the vestries was performed by them, not as a body, but through their direct representatives—the church wardens. As early as 1632 these officers were chosen at a public meeting of the parishioners. Two were annually selected in each parish. The oath prescribed for church wardens shows the general character of their duties: It was incumbent upon them to present to the grand jury all persons leading a profane and ungodly life, such, for instance, as common swearers, blasphemers, violators of the Sabbath, drunkards, adulterers, slanderers and backbiters; all disturbers of the congregation in church, and all masters and mistresses failing to catechize the young and ignorant dependent on them." They were required to return a correct account of all collections made in accord with the vestry's assessments; to disburse the amount of these collections in obedience to the vestry's orders; to keep the church edifice in good repair; to purchase the books needed for the registry of births and deaths; and also the communion cloth and napkins, and the cushions for the pulpit. It was the church wardens' duty also to call attention to all cases of extreme poverty. The aged pauper was as much an object of their care as the most youthful orphan entirely lacking in means. The church wardens were assisted in the performance of their general duties by two officers, known as sidesmen and questmen, who were especially interested in looking out for persons whose conduct made it necessary that they should be subjected to civil or ecclesiastical discipline.

**III. The Church Edifices.**

The first religious services held in Virginia were held at Jamestown, under an old sail cloth, only a short time after the voyagers of 1607 had landed. The sail cloth was tied to the trunks of three or four large oaks or cedars. The walls of this improvised sacred edifice were made of rails mauled from timber procured on the spot; the seats, of the round and unhewn logs, and the pulpit, of a bar of wood nailed to two trees. When the sky became overcast and rain fell, the services were held in a large tent brought over from England. It was not long before a much less primitive church edifice was erected. The interior, at least, must have presented a very pleasing aspect. The whole chancel was constructed of the timber of cedar trees, and of the same beautiful and sweet-smelling material was also made the pulpit, the pews, and the window frames. The communion table consisted entirely of black walnut, whilst the baptismal fount had been skilfully hewed and carved out of a single block of wood. The interior walls were kept decorated with the many flowers found growing in such profusion in the thickets of the neighboring woods, and no doubt when the frosts of November had destroyed all these blooms, branches of cedar, pine and holly were used to take the place of the dogwood, the sweetbud, the daisy, the clematis and the arbutus. A steeple rose from the west end of the church, and within it were suspended two bells, which the sexton regularly rang at 10 o'clock in the morning and at 4 in the afternoon—the earliest Sunday church bells to call Englishmen to worship in the New World.

By a law passed in 1631 the inhabitants of every parish were required to contribute an amount sufficient to erect a church on a site which had been selected by the clergyman and church wardens. The tax imposed for this purpose fell, like the items of the regular county and public levies, on the people at large. Special gifts for the erection of churches were also made by benevolent and pious citizens of the colony. Before a public levy was laid for the construction of the church at Middle Plantation, in 1678, voluntary donations were solicited of the parishioners, and in response to this appeal John Page and Thomas Ludwell each subscribed £20, and Philip Ludwell and Colonel Thorp each £10, whilst numerous citizens contributed, respectively, £5.

A contract between the church wardens of Hunger's Parish, in Accomac, and Simon Thomas, a carpenter, preserved among the records of that county, gives, no doubt, a fairly accurate idea as to the method followed in building parish churches towards the close of the seventeenth century. Under the terms of this agreement the projected edifice was to extend forty feet in length and twenty-five in width. Its framework, which was to be constructed of wood, was to be supported by blocks cut from the trunks of the locust, or a tree especially remarkable for the durability of its fibre, even when exposed to the most trying variations of weather. This skeleton frame was to be covered with planks of the finest quality, whilst the braces, studs and rafters were to consist of seasoned oak.

The great majority of the churches built in Virginia during the seventeenth century were built, like the one in Accomac just referred to, of wood. There were a few, however, made of brick. Such was the character of the material entering into the construction of the edifices at Middle Plantation and Jamestown. The church near Smithfield, which still stands in its original beauty and solidity, was also built of brick, and forms perhaps the most admirable specimen of ecclesiastical architecture in Colonial Virginia surviving to the present day.

The plate and ornaments belonging to many of the churches were both handsome and costly. Most of these were obtained by special gifts or bequests of wealthy planters, and consisted of communion cups, chalices, flagons and plates, and baptismal basins or bowls. On at least one occasion the King of England himself made a present of sacred volumes to the Virginian churches. This occurred in 1683, when there were delivered, in the royal name, through the Bishop of London, forty-two sets, each of which consisted of a folio Bible and Common Prayer Book in calf; the homilies, the canons, the Thirty-nine Articles, and the table of marriages.

**IV. The Clergymen.**

Among the clergymen during this century, not one, so far as is now known, was a native of the colony. Some had been born and educated in Scotland, but a very much larger number had emigrated from England, where they had first seen the light, and where they had also received their first lessons in letters and theology. In a general way, it may be said that there were two influences leading the great majority to settle in Virginia—first, in order to acquire a benefice in England, the clergyman must obtain the favor of some person or institution having the right of preferment, and it was no easy task for a young divine, lacking in powerful connections, to commend himself to the good will of the individual or corporation entitled to name the next incumbent of a vacant rectorship; secondly, the condition of the clergy residing in the rural districts of England during the seventeenth century was not distinguished for such comfort, prosperity and honor as to make removal to the colony always appear a step distinctly disadvantageous.

It reveals the extraordinary pains the colony's authorities were at to secure competent divines to fill the different vacancies among the parishes that, in 1650, the General Assembly declared that should a shipmaster or merchant import a clergyman without any agreement with him touching the payment of his expenses, then such shipmaster or merchant should receive by the public levy, to reimburse him for the outlay, £20, either in the form of a bill of exchange or of 20,000 pounds of tobacco. It was with a view of securing a more certain means of supplying all vacant pulpits in the colony that, in 1660-1, the project of establishing a college in Virginia was considered by the General Assembly. Sometimes a clergyman like Rev. Philip Mallory, in 1661, was dispatched to England to arrange for the sending to Virginia of a greater number of ministers. In 1680 the Council requested the Governor, as the only hope of filling all the pulpits of the colony, to beg the Bishop of London to furnish the vacant parishes with "able, godly and orthodox" pastors. Half a decade later William Fitzhugh declared that there still existed in the colony a pressing need "for able, sober and faithful" ministers. The very common way of supplying the want of a clergyman in a vacant parish was to appoint a deacon.

The vestry, as we have seen, was the controlling power in filling the vacant pulpits. In a new country like Virginia it was impossible for such a system as that governing the appointments to livings in England to spring up. There was no influence accompanying the division and settlement of the virgin soil to create a circle of patrons, such as had existed almost immemorially in the mother country, in whose disposal every benefice in the colony would rest. Had there been

(Continued on Eleventh Page.)